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ABSTRACT

This book offers ideas or benchmarks about how to improve the postsecondary learning environment, based on interviews with academic leaders at four universities in the United States. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 32 academic leaders from four research universities: Northwestern University (Illinois); Pennsylvania State University; Syracuse University (New York); and the University of Arizona. Using data from the interviews, the book discusses the challenges facing universities in the 21st century and the redefinition that will be needed to improve the learning climate. It also addresses the role of the academic disciplines and their effect on the quality of learning. The book examines student selection and access, questions of quality and diversity, and ways of fostering students' motivation for learning. It explores instructional improvement methods that are focused on student learning, along with projects undertaken by the universities to support the improvement of teaching. The use of assessment to define tasks and measure learning and teaching is noted, along with changes in faculty responsibilities and rewards. The book concludes by reviewing the educational challenges facing universities and existing approaches to institutional assessment. (Contains approximately 275 references.) (MDM)

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